



**SUPPORT
OVER
THE
FESTIVE
BREAK**



WINTER CLOSURE SUPPORT INFORMATION

SOAS is closed from the 25th of December to the 3rd of January, inclusive.

This booklet aims to give you information on where to access help and advice throughout the university closure days, and also to let you know what social support is being facilitated by students and the local community during this period.

If you need assistive technology to access this document online, please consider using the ATbar (<https://www.atbar.org/>) which is a free software that will enable you to change text size, have an audio version via text to speech or use an overlay.



KEY INFORMATION

Travel

No TfL services (tube, bus, tram, overground) services operate on Christmas Day (25th December), and there are likely to be changes to TfL timetables over the Christmas and New Year period. Santander bikes, coaches and private taxis are still available.

Regional train and coach services are likely to have increased demand in the lead-up to Christmas, and the time and frequency of services will probably change as well; consider booking tickets ahead of time and try to travel at quieter times of day (early morning or late evening).

Make sure you keep up to date with changes to transport options in your area via the [TfL website](#) or app, and/or your local train operator's website, and think about downloading a private hire taxi app as well so you can get a lift if you need one.



KEY INFORMATION

Emergency Housing

You are advised to contact our accommodation providers directly should you experience an emergency situation whilst living in halls, or regarding a pre-arrival issue. You can also contact them directly for any availability for short stay housing which you will need to pay for. For advice about homelessness please see the Shelter website <https://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Accommodation Office

The SOAS Accommodation Office will be closed for the Winter holidays from 4pm on Monday 23rd December 2024 until 9am on Monday 6th January 2025. Please contact us before the closure dates if you have any queries regarding December or January arrivals. We have very limited availability for students hoping to arrive in January so please do get in touch urgently.

Arrivals between 19th December 2024 and 6th January 2025

If you are arriving between 19th December and 6th January and haven't yet confirmed a place to stay, please contact applyaccommodation@soas.ac.uk before the 19th of December for information. You are advised to pre-book any housing before arrival into the UK/London.



KEY INFORMATION

Finance Advice and the SOAS Hardship Fund

If you are concerned about your finances or immigration issues, please get in touch before the 20th of December 2024 so we have time to respond before the Winter closure. If you need to apply for a hardship fund please do so by Friday 6th December 2024 so we can process your application and release funds before the end of term.

Immigration Advice

If you need urgent immigration advice, the [UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\) website](#) will hopefully provide you with the information you need, UKCISA also have a student helpline. Please check their website for opening times.

If you are applying for a Student visa, either inside or outside the UK, please see [our detailed online guidance](#). If you have lost your BRP or passport please [see the UKCISA guidance](#).



KEY INFORMATION

The Students Assistance Programme

If you need in-the-moment wellbeing support, you can get in touch with the Student Assistance Programme. SOAS students can also have a course of brief therapy with the Student Assistance Programme at no cost to them. They can access up to 6 sessions of therapy either face-to-face, by video call or by telephone. In addition to this, students can access the Spectrum Life portal which is pre-loaded with lots of wellbeing information and content. You can access the Programme using the details below:

To receive support, please call:

- Freephone UK: 0800 0318227
- International: 00353 1 518 0277

To access the wellbeing portal, register via this link:

<https://soasuol.spectrum.life/login?org=SOASUoL>



KEY INFORMATION

Mental Health

If you feel like you might attempt suicide or may have seriously harmed yourself then you need urgent medical help. Please:

- Call 999 for an ambulance
- Go straight to A&E, if you can
- Call your local crisis team, to find their information please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline>

If you need non-emergency medical advice on a mental health issue, visit 111.nhs.uk online or call 111. You can also call or visit your GP - although GP practices are often closed for some days during Christmas, NHS 111 will be able to advise you over the phone and ensure you see someone in person if needed.

If you feel you need someone to talk to, call the Samaritans on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org.



KEY INFORMATION

Mental Health

London Nightline is an anonymous listening and information service run by students in London, for students in London. Call London Nightline on 0207 631 0101, text on 07717 989 900, email listening@nightline.org.uk, or [access the online chat](#).

Mind are an independent charity which provides advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They have a comprehensive list of information and resources related to mental health topics on their [website](#).

[Student Space](#) are also available for calls or text chats and emotional support 24 hours a day over the festive break, including on Christmas day, and has some top tips for students about preparing for this period.

Additional contact numbers:

- Papyrus: 0800 068 4141
- SANEline: 0300 304 7000
- The Mix: 0808 808 4994



KEY INFORMATION

Domestic or Sexual Violence

If you are in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police.

Refuge are an independent charity that provides specialist support to women and children escaping domestic violence and other forms of violence. Call Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline for free and confidential advice, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247. Visit the [helpline website](#) to access further information, a contact form and the live chat service.

Mankind are an independent charity that provides specialist support to men escaping domestic violence. Call Mankind's confidential helpline (10am to 4pm) on 01823 334244. [Visit the website](#) to access further information.

Rapecrisis are an independent charity that provides specialist support for women who have experienced sexual violence. Call Rapecrisis' national helpline on 0808 500 222 or [visit the website](#) for further information.

SurvivorsUK are an independent charity that run the National Male Survivors Online Webchat, a chat service for men and non-binary people who have experienced sexual abuse either as a child or an adult. Access to Survivors UK's online chat can be accessed [via their website](#).



KEY INFORMATION

Victim of Crime

Where someone is seriously ill, injured, or they are in immediate danger, call 999. If it's not a life-threatening emergency and you or the person you're with does not need immediate medical attention or police intervention, please consider:

- Visiting [police.uk](https://www.police.uk) online or calling 101 for non-emergency police enquiries, such as reporting a crime
- Visiting [111.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) online or calling 111 for non-emergency medical advice
- [Visiting or calling your GP](#)
- Going to your [local NHS walk-in centre](#)
- Going to your [local urgent care centre](#) (NHS referral only) or your [local minor injuries unit](#)
- Visiting [Victim Support online](#) or calling 08 08 16 89 111. Victim Support are an independent charity that offers confidential support and information for victims of crime, such as local Victim Support teams and a confidential 24/7 support line and live chat



KEY INFORMATION

Physical Health

If you become unwell over the Christmas period, visit 111.nhs.uk online or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice. You can also visit your [local NHS walk-in centre](#) or go to your [local urgent care centre](#) (NHS referral only). If you become seriously injured or ill, call 999 or visit your [local Accident and Emergency Department](#) without delay.

Keeping a stock of common medications and health supplies ensures that you have access to them during those times the shops and pharmacies are closed during the Christmas period. Visit the NHS '[Your medicine cabinet](#)' webpage for information on common medications and health supplies to stock at home.



KEY INFORMATION

Nutrition

It can be easy to over-indulge during the Christmas period which can have a negative impact on our physical health and mood.

If you drink alcohol, try to drink moderately. Excessive or binge drinking can result in impaired balance and coordination, impaired vision and reflexes, unstable emotions, nausea and vomiting. It can also decrease our judgement and decision-making skills, causing us to be more reckless and uninhibited. For information on making better choices about drinking, visit [drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk) online.

Try to eat regular, nutritionally balanced meals. Overeating can result in lethargy, digestive problems, and unhealthy weight gain. For information on healthy eating, visit the [World Health Organization's healthy diet guidelines webpage](#).

Try to incorporate regular exercise into your weekly routine, even over the Christmas period. For information on physical activity and its benefits, visit the [World Health Organization's physical activity guidelines webpage](#).



SOCIAL

Students' Union

Visit the SU webpage for information on activities and events happening over the holiday period.

International Students House (ISH), provides social activities for international students in member universities. The good news is all SOAS students are members! ISH will be running events remotely over the winter vacation period. To find out more, and to receive updates, please follow the ISH Facebook and Instagram pages.

Many faith communities will be opening their doors for private prayer over the holiday season, and will also be hosting online activities. They will welcome students of faith, and also those without faith who want to join in seasonal activities.



PRACTICAL ADVICE

Food Shopping

Supermarkets will probably be busier than usual in the lead-up to Christmas, and most shops will be closed or have shorter opening times on Christmas Eve (24th December), Christmas Day (25th December), Boxing Day (26th December), New Year's Eve (31st December) and New Year's Day (1st January). It's likely to be more difficult to find a slot for supermarket deliveries as well since more people in the community will be isolating ahead of travelling for Christmas.

If you can, it's a good idea to stock up on basics ahead of time so that you don't have to go to the shops too often. You might want to check what you've got in your cupboards now and replenish things like pasta, rice, frozen and tinned food, toiletries, and maybe get a few instant meals too. Think about getting yourself a treat as well – maybe an advent calendar, bubble bath or some mince pies.

Student Accommodation

Student accommodation will be open. Hall managers or reception are there to help you during this period and some will be organising online or in person social events – speak to them if you would like to volunteer to support with any halls activities over Christmas.



SERVICES DIRECTORY

Bereavement

- Cruse: 0808 808 1677
- Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide: 0300 111 5065

Domestic Abuse and Assault

- Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327
- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- SOLACE: 0808 802 5565
- Survivors UK: 020 3322 1860 (text)
- The Havens: 020 3299 1599 / 020 3299 6900 (urgent)

Drugs and Addiction

- Addiction Advocates: 0800 012 6088
- Alcoholics Anonymous: 0800 9177 650
- Drinkline: 0300 123 1110
- Frank: 0300 123 6600

LGBTQIA+

- GALOP: 0800 999 5428
- LGBT Foundation: 03453 30 30 30
- Switchboard: 0300 330 0630
- Metro: 020 8305 5005



